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AUTHOR Crim, Roger D.
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ABSTRACT

Interest in extending the school year to make more efficient use of school facilities has been long standing. The most popular method of extending the school year is the summer session. Although widely popular with administrators, teachers, parents, and students, the summer session suffers from the same limitation as other extended school year plans--it costs more to operate than the regular year alone. The Lexington, Kentucky, comprehensive summer session has increased school costs by about 17 percent. A similar program in Rochester, Minnesota, uses a fee-tuition plan to lower the costs to about an 11 percent increase. The Polk County, Florida, 35-day session that can accommodate 50 percent of the student population costs an additional 6 percent over the regular school year. A voluntary summer term program for 50 percent of the Oxford district student population is estimated to cost about 6.3 percent of the regular school budget. If nonpromoted students are required to attend the summer session and the cost of these students repeating a year is deducted from the cost of the summer session, the net cost of the summer session drops to 3.8 percent of the regular budget. (Author/IRT)

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A BRIEF REVIEW OF YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL PLANS WITH COST ESTIMATES FOR A PROPOSED SUMMER TERM FOR OXFORD DISTRICT, MISSISSIPPI, SCHOOLS

Roger D. Crim
Assistant Professor of Education
Plymouth State College
University of New Hampshire

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THE YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL IDEA

Each year more and more school systems are adopting, or moving in the direction of, an extension of the traditional school year into the summer months. An estimated 600 to 1000 school districts around the country are seriously studying proposals which would extend the traditional school year beyond the current nine-month calendar (1:17; 6:51; 12:35; 5:66). A review of the abundant educational literature dealing with such year-round school plans reveals that this interest is an old rather than a new idea. Year-round schools were briefly tried in the 1800's, at the turn of the century, and again in the 1930's, but each time the idea failed to catch on (12:35).

The year-round school is gaining new advocates from many sectors. The traditional school year of 180 days, an outgrowth of our once agrarian society, is now being questioned by professional educators as well as the lay public (7:9).

THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOL YEAR: A BAD BUSINESS PRACTICE?

Since the turn of the century, in times of school plant, money, and/or teacher shortages, the public has viewed the nine-month school year as a businessman would--inadequate use of available resources. "To the eyes of a businessman, a school plant idle all summer may suggest inefficient use of capital investments" (2:4). 3

In the eyes of the tax-ridden public, the allowing of physical plants and trained personnel to be idle three months out of every year is an obviously bad business practice. "An astute businessman...would inquire about costs involved in operating a school plant for twelve months as compared to the additional educational benefits gained from such an operation" (2:4).

YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL PROPOSALS

As in the past, interest in the year-round school is being "generated by financial considerations." These "financial considerations" have given birth to many year-round plans of operation. Some of these plans exist merely as proposals, while others have been and are being practiced. These different proposals can be placed in the following classifications (1:7-9; 13:6; 12:35):

1. summer term of a few weeks
2. staggered four-quarters
3. four quarters of continuous study
4. staggered trimesters
5. three trimesters of continuous study
6. extended school year
7. 45-15 plans
8. quinmester

All of the proposed year-round plans have their distinct advantages and disadvantages. It is ironic that all of these plans--created as money-saving, financial panaceas--will cost above and beyond the traditional 180-day school year. "Before

deciding on use of such a program a community must accept the fact that it is more expensive to operate" (2:4).

"Current data are needed on costs and administrative problems encountered by schools presently engaged in year-round programs." Estimated cost factors for such year-round programs are available in educational literature. Special attention is devoted here to the summer term plans which appear to be the most popular (among educators as well as the public) and the most likely to succeed of the proposed plans (2:25-26; 10:88; 3:1).

SUMMER TERM PLANS MOST POPULAR

The summer term plans seem to be the most popular not only with administrators, who believe it is the least disruptive of the year-round school plans, but also with parents, pupils, and teachers. In the Rochester, Minnesota, summer term program ninety percent of the teachers have participated, and eighty percent of the teachers took part during the first five years that Lexington, Kentucky, operated their summer term program (4:39-40).

In school systems that have operated voluntary summer term programs, experience has shown that about one-third of the student population takes advantage of the opportunities provided (1:16). Sixteen to twenty percent of the regular student population in the Lexington, Kentucky, school system have participated in the summer term program (4:36). The Polk County, Florida, feasibility study for year-round operation of the County's schools proposed seven different year-round plans to the parents, teachers and students of Polk County,

including the quarter and trimester plans. Seventy percent of the parents, seventy-nine percent of the teachers, and sixty-eight percent of the junior-senior high students "would choose a regular school year plus a summer school" (7:55).

COST OF SUMMER TERM PROGRAMS

The summer term plan has had favorable support and promises success; but, like all the proposed plans, there is one "objectionable and limiting factor: they cost more money and are economical only as they increase the over-all return on the community investment in plant" (3:1). Any summer term plan, if it is to be successful, must be financed by the local school system. Fee or tuition summer programs discriminate against low-income or limited-income families, and only a small percentage of the regular student body will attend such programs (1:63; 8:355).

Several types of summer term programs have been proposed and operated. The cost of a summer term program is dependent upon many factors, making it difficult to determine exact costs. Like any year-round school program, the cost of a summer term program will be dependent upon how many pupils participate (7:33).

THE COST FACTOR OF SUMMER TERM PLANS WILL ALSO VARY WITH THE EXTENT AND TYPE OF SUMMER TERM PROGRAM PUT INTO OPERATION. A SUMMER TERM PROGRAM WILL COST FROM FIVE TO TWENTY PERCENT IN EXCESS OF THE ANNUAL BUDGET OF A SCHOOL SYSTEM (1:8; 2:23; 11:16-18).

THE LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, SUMMER TERM PROGRAM

Lexington, Kentucky, is an excellent example of a somewhat comprehensive summer term program that has been very successful. The school system provides students opportunities to complete remedial work and enrichment courses, and teachers are provided opportunities to develop professionally. The Lexington year-round school plan "operates on a five-year cycle. Three summers of the five, the teacher is teaching and working on curriculum; one summer she studies, working toward a higher degree, or taking courses that will enrich her chosen field. The fifth summer is for personal leave" (9:28). The cost of operating this extended program has increased school costs by about seventeen percent (4:37).

THE ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA, SUMMER TERM PROGRAM

Rochester, Minnesota, has adopted a similar program, but the additional expenditures are smaller. Remedial work in academic subjects and a variety of enrichment activities are offered to students during a twelve-week, tuition-fee summer session. Volunteer teachers are assigned to one or more of five service areas: summer recreation, teaching local summer classes, college attendance, local workships, and approved travel. For teachers involved, there is a ten percent increase in pay for each extra month. This fee-tuition summer term plan has increased school costs about eleven percent (4:40).

Based on the 1972-1973 budget, the cost for the Oxford School District to adopt a summer term program similar to

those operated in Lexington or Rochester would be an additional .2 to .35 million dollars. Both of these programs involve the spending of public school funds for the professional improvement of the teachers of the school systems. This is a considerable departure from general practice. Unless people in the community understand the purpose of such expenditures and see that it constitutes a sensible use of school funds, they will not support it enthusiastically" (1:19).

THE POLK COUNTY, FLORIDA, SUMMER TERM PROPOSAL

Financially, the Polk County, Florida, proposed summer term plan is much more attractive. This tuition-free program included enrichment, remedial, and advanced courses for participating students. No professional advancement provisions for teaching personnel were included. The cost of operating the Polk County thirty-five-day session, with provisions for accommodating fifty percent of the student population, was estimated at six percent of the regular school expenditures (7:33).

The largest increased expenditure under the Polk County plan or any other summer term plan was for instructional personnel. Providing for fifty percent of the student population would necessitate a fifty percent employment of instructional staff for the additional period. For the instructional staff involved there would be a seventeen-and-a-half percent increase over their ten month salary. Thus, the total gross expenditure for instructional salaries for the summer term would be eight and three-quarters percent of the present

budgeted expenditure for instruction (7:33).

In the Polk County proposal there would be no increased cost for central administration, for the personnel involved would be twelve-month employees. "The overhead costs of administration continue to be approximately the same in many communities whether the schools are open or closed during the summer months" (1:8-9; 7:33).

Operational costs and the cost of auxiliary services in Polk County were assumed to increase about the same percent (8.75) as instructional costs. It was also assumed that "there should be little or no increase in cost for maintenance, fixed charges, and capital outlay" (7:33).

COST FOR OXFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT SUMMER TERM

THE COST TO THE OXFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT OF IMPLEMENTING SUCH A VOLUNTARY SUMMER TERM PROGRAM FOR FIFTY PERCENT OF THE STUDENT POPULATION WOULD BE 6.3 PERCENT OF THE REGULAR SCHOOL BUDGET. (See Table I.) THIS WOULD BE AN EXPENDITURE OF APPROXIMATELY $123,800.00 IN ADDITION TO THE ANNUAL EXPENDITURE OF 1.97 MILLION DOLLARS. (See Table II.)

Financially, an even more attractive summer term program was proposed in the Polk County feasibility study: a "summer term program operated without cost to parents but with compulsory attendance for students who are not promoted and voluntary attendance for others." Much of the cost of a summer term program "could be offset by savings in the cost of reteaching students who had not been promoted because this plan would provide the opportunity for weak students to make

up deficiencies during the summer months." While this variant of the summer term plan would not be as popular among the students and the general public as a completely voluntary summer program, the program would have a smaller cost factor and would probably give students much more incentive to pass in order to avoid remedial summer work (7:33,55).

During the 1972-1973 academic year, 81 students in the Oxford School District were not promoted. They represented 2.9 percent of the average daily membership of the district and an investment of $712.21 per student (cost per pupil, 1972-1973). Based on the 1972-1973 instructional cost per pupil, the cost of letting those students repeat their work during the following regular school year would be $73,689.01. If those students were to make up their work during the summer term program, the estimated cost of the 2.9 percent repeating their work during the regular school year would become a savings that would reduce the cost of operating the summer term program for fifty percent of the student population from $123,842.27 to $40,153.26--an increase of only 3.8 percent of the regular school budget. (See Table III.)

Of all the year-round school proposals the summer term plans seem to be the most satisfactory yet proposed. Certainly the summer term programs have gained more acceptance than the other proposals. Yet, the additional cost of such a program will be the holdback. The returns on such an investment seem great, and some professional educators see the summer term plans setting "the stage for more refined extended school year plans such as the 45-15 and quadrimester" (10:89). Before an

intelligent decision on whether or not to extend the school year can be made, the public must weigh the relatively small increase in financial outlay necessary to achieve the more efficient utilization of multi-million dollar physical plants and professional personnel against the almost incalculable benefits in terms of human dignity for the potential drop-outs who can remain with their peers instead of repeating and for the able students who want to enrich or accelerate their educational programs.

Table 1

Estimated Percent Increase in Total Net Expenditures for a Voluntary Summer Term for Fifty percent of the Oxford School District School Population

Function	Percent of Total Net Expenditure Under Present Plan	Estimated Percent Increase for Summer Term	Estimated Percent Increase in Total Net Expenditures
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Administration	4.5	0.00	0.00
Instruction	60.3	8.75	5.28
Operation of Plant	6.9	8.75	0.60
Auxiliary Services	4.6	8.75	0.40
Fixed Charges	6.5	0.00	0.00
Capital Outlay Costs	15.5	0.00	0.00
Maintenance of Plant	1.5	0.00	0.00
			6.28

Sources:

Column 2: General Fund Budget of Expenditures, 1972-1973 Fiscal Year, Oxford School District, Oxford, Mississippi, 1972.

Column 3: Florida Educational Research and Development Council. Year-Round Schools for Polk County, Florida: A Feasibility Study. Gainesville: the University of Florida, 1966.

Column 4: Multiply Col. 2 by Col. 3.

Table 2

Estimated Increase in Total Expenditures for a Voluntary Summer Term for Fifty Percent of the Oxford School District Population

Function	Budget 1972-1973 Fiscal Year	Estimated Percent Increase for Summer Term	Estimated Increase in Total Expenditures
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Administration	88,100.00	0.00	0.00
Instruction	1,188,230.90	8.75	103,970.20
Operation of Plant	136,620.00	8.75	11,954.25
Auxiliary Services	90,489.50	8.75	7,917.82
Fixed Charges	129,291.00	0.00	0.00
Capital Outlay Costs	305,410.89	0.00	0.00
Maintenance of Plant	30,418.17	0.00	0.00
	$ 1,968,560.46		$ 123,842.27

Sources:

Column 2: General Fund Budget of Expenditures, 1972-1973 Fiscal Year, Oxford School District, Oxford, Mississippi, 1972.

Column 3: Florida Educational Research and Development Council. Year-Round Schools for Polk County, Florida: A Feasibility Study. Gainesville: the University of Florida, 1966.

Column 4: Multiply Col. 2 by Col. 3.

Table 3

Estimated Net Cost of a Voluntary Summer Term for Fifty Percent of the Oxford School District School Population, with Mandatory Attendance for Retentions

Budget 1972-1973 Fiscal Year	Average Daily Membership	Cost Per Pupil
$ 1,968,560.46	2,764	$ 712.21

Retentions for 1972-1973 Academic Year	Cost Per Pupil	Cost of Repeating School Year
81	$ 712.21	$ 73,689.01

Gross Cost of Voluntary Summer Term (6.3% of 1972-1973 budget) ..... $ 123,842.27

Cost of Retentions Repeating School Year (3.7% of 1972-1973 budget) ..... $ 73,689.01

Net Cost of Voluntary Summer Term with Mandatory Attendance for Retentions (3.8% of 1972-1973 budget) ..... $ 40,153.26

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